

THE NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

The hope of the world today and of the generations of tomorrow is the simple religion of Christ. Honestly believed and sincerely practiced. Yet in spite of this need, one of the major problems of our day is the matter of denominationalism. It is next to impossible to get people to think about religion without thinking of it in the framework of denominationalism. One has to fight for his life to keep from being “penned up in some denomination.” Some in the church have given over to denominational theology and are now saying that the church is just another denomination. But I refuse to give up the fight and be “pushed into a church of Christ denomination.” Some brethren (?) may join one and preach for one but I want no part of it. Some of the language that is being used today, indicates that some are thinking of the church in a denominational sense. I hear people talking about “Church of Christ preachers.” This language shows that such talk is just as sectarian as “Baptist preacher or Methodist preacher.” I heard a person say, “I am a Church of Christ.” Whether he realized it or not, what he said was just as sectarian as if someone had said, “I am a Church of God,” meaning Holiness.

When Christ came into the world, He found it divided into sects and parties. Their peculiarities were of more concern than the commandments of God. They gloried in the things that made them differ. Christ knew that if His followers loved parties and sects, they would be doomed from the start. Denominationalism is doomed because it is contrary to every basic principle of the Gospel. A sectarian spirit and attitude will also spell the doom of the church of the Lord unless it is checked. The very nature of Christianity is non-denominational and anti-denominational. This is true whether it is Protestant denominationalism, Catholic denominationalism, or “Church of Christ” denominationalism.

Non-Denominational Christ

Christ is non-denominational and anti-denominational. Denomination equals division. Christ prayed for unity. He did not thank God that He was a denominational Christ so everyone could have “a Christ of their choice with a church of their choice.” “...And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4). The church of the Lord is just as non-denominational as its head. It would be interesting to hear some sectarian explain how you can have denominational bodies with a non-denominational head.

Non-Denominational Gospel

The Gospel is non-denominational and anti-denominational. It is for all nations (Matthew 28:18--20). It is for every creature (Mark 16:16). The Gospel is not for some select few. The message of the Gospel does not belong to some sect of denomination. The Gospel is opposed to division; it condemns division. The Gospel is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). How is it possible to take a non-denominational seed and produce denominational fruit? The product partakes of the nature of the seed. Timothy grass seed will not produce Johnson grass even if a man by the name of Johnson plants the Timothy grass seed. The Gospel is not only non-denominational, it is also unalterable (Galatians 1:7,9). Since the Gospel is non-denominational and unchangeable, how can men preach it and produce denominationalism? It takes a perverted Gospel to produce a denomination and the preacher and the product of such preaching is cursed (Galatians 1:7,9).

The requirements of the Gospel are non-denominational. The Gospel requires the same for all. It requires the same faith and the same obedience. The objective faith is

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

THOSE WHO WILL COME...

Text: _____

I. ...Are _____

Notes:

II. ...Are _____

Notes:

III. ...Are _____

Notes:

**LIFE OBSERVATIONS
FROM LITTLE ONES**

Steven (3) hugged and kissed his Mom good-night, saying: "I love you so much, that when you die I'm going to bury you outside my bedroom window."

Brittany (4) couldn't get a bottle lid off. Her Mom explained it was a childproof cap and she'd have to open it. Shocked, she asked: "How does it know it's me?"

Susan (4) was drinking juice when she got the hiccups. "Please don't give me this juice again," she said. "It makes my teeth cough."

Diana (4) stepped onto the bathroom scale and asked: "So how much do I cost?"

LESSER SIN?

The devil, according to an old story, once gave a man the choice of committing the sin of murder or adultery or drunkenness. Thinking that drunkenness was the lesser of the three, he chose that. However, while drunk, he committed adultery and murder. Sin develops!

the same for all—the Word of God (Romans 10:17). It is called the faith (Jude 3). You cannot have one objective faith, the basis of faith, and various subjective faiths or various beliefs. You may have different degrees of subjective faith, but they are all degrees of the one faith.

Non-Denominational Name

The name "Christian" is non-denominational. A sectarian Christian is a contradiction of terms. One does not read of "kinds of Christians" in the New Testament. One may be a weak or a strong Christian but not a Methodist or a Baptist Christian. A denominational Christian (?) is either too short on one side or too long on the other. He has not accepted all that the scriptures teach or has added something that they do not teach, and in either instance is not pleasing to God. What denomination did the Christians in Antioch belong to (Acts 11:16)? What denomination was Paul pleading with Agrippa to "join" (Acts 26:28)? When Paul became a Christian, he quit the Pharisee's denomination and he did not join another one.

Non-Denominational Blood

It takes the blood of Christ to save (Ephesians 1:7). The church is a product of the blood (Acts 20:28). Christ died for all. Everyone that is saved is saved by His blood. How can one be purchased by the blood and not be a member of the church? It is impossible. Unless it is possible for the blood of Christ to be denominational, then it is not possible for the church to be denominational. You cannot have a non-denominational blood with a denominational church. Furthermore, His blood sealed the New Testament (Matthew 26:28). Thus, you cannot have a non-denominational doctrine. The doctrine of Christ, the New Testament, and his blood go together. But it takes a denominational doctrine to produce a denominational church and you cannot mix the non-denominational blood of Christ with a denominational doctrine.

Non-Denominational Savior

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). The body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Is Christ a denominational Savior? I know of now on that makes such a claim. Denominationalists admit this when they try to get people saved and then tell them to join some denomination. But the passage just quoted shows that if one is saved by Christ, he is a member of the body and the body is the church. Does one need to be a member of two churches? He does if after being saved by Christ and being made a member of His body, he needs to join some denomination.

-Franklin Camp

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

There is never a guarantee of a tomorrow. James stated clearly that life “is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14), and that any plans should be contingent on the recognition that everything is subject as to whether “the Lord wills” (vs. 15). However, that does not mean that we are not responsible for looking toward the future in preparation. It seems to be fearfully evident that too often we spend more time dwelling on the past than we do planning for the future. Certainly the past should never be forgotten, but rather should be studied and honored (as per principle of Romans 15:4). In the process, though, we should continually look toward the future in anticipation of what awaits personally, collectively, and eternally.

In many ways the Jews of the first century were guilty of relying on the past rather than recognizing the accountability of their future. Continually, when called to the carpet for their ungodliness, they would remind the accusers that they were Abraham’s children, a distinction of righteousness in their minds. One occasion in particular stands out. In John 8:31,32, Jesus was speaking to some Jews who actually believed Him to be the Christ, and offered them the freedom that is available through the avenue of truth. In that one chapter, these people reminded Him no less than three times that they were Abraham’s children, in their minds a statement of saving distinction. But Jesus’ answer would be that they did not need to rely solely on the glories of the past, but they needed to recognize their responsibility and plan for future accountability. We, too, need to look toward the future recognizing the responsibilities we have and the opportunities we will enjoy.

Looking toward the future, personally we must see our opportunities. As Christians, we must not glory in the legacy of past accomplishments by ourselves or others, but we must continually seek opportunities for service today and in the future. Though Paul could easily have been satisfied with the work he had already accomplished and that had been accomplished by others, he would say:

“For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand” (2 Corinthians 10:14-16).

Paul looked to the future, not with content, but with desire to do more and more, not for personal glory, but for glory to be rendered to his God. Such must be the attitude of every Christian. We must never arrive at a point in our lives where we are satisfied with the efforts we have put forth for God, but we should ever seek to do more, whatever it might be we are able. So looking toward the future, personally we must see our opportunities.

Looking toward the future, collectively we must see our responsibilities. The church in the past was known for its scriptural preparedness, both in discussing the Bible and living the principles of the Bible. Still in many quarters is the church effective in preparing young and old in the same way. But brutal honesty demands the realization of failure in some respects. Countless New Testament Christians have been ill prepared to face the proliferation of error and evil that exists in this world, and the result has been a mass departure from truth and righteousness. If the history of Israel proves anything to us, it proves that complete apostasy is always only one generation away. We cannot be satisfied with the preparation of past generations if we do not see the responsibility that we have for the preparation of future generations. If it cannot be said of each coming generation as it was said of Timothy, “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures” (2 Timothy 3:15), then the preceding generation of saints has failed. Thus, looking toward the future, collectively we must see our responsibilities.

Look toward the future, eternally we must see our possibilities. This very moment, are you planning to be in heaven after this life is over? Mentally, surely you say yes; but does that answer translate into your manner of living? God has made it possible for us to eternally be saved in heaven, but if we are not this very minute in a state of preparation for that great blessing, then we have missed the whole purpose of living. We, like Solomon, should recognize our need “to fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). If we will, then we will live each day as though it were our last, looking forward to the home that awaits us. Only, though, will this be the case if we look toward the future seeing our eternal possibilities.

Are we looking toward, and making preparation for the future that awaits us. The future of this life is never known, but “if the Lord wills” we must be ready to face the challenges that await us. Eternity is real, but are we ready?

-Andy Brewer

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